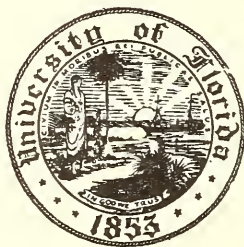


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L E C H I T I C A

In Honor of Charlotte Bielawski-Yess (1917 - 1957)

on the occasion of

the fifteenth anniversary of her work on

T H E P O L I S H L A N D

MARION MOORE COLEMAN, Editor

ALLIANCE COLLEGE PUBLICATIONS

Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania

1958





Charlotte

An eagle, 'twas, brought forth these wings of mine.  
Should then the knight who wears them feebler be  
In man's great cause than was the bird itself?

— Słowacki, *Balladyna*



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*So stands the word alone, eternal rhyme,  
Contemptuous for aye, of force and time.*

Jan Kochanowski

## CHARLOTTE BIELAWSKI-YESS (1917—1957)

### *Of Charlotte . . .*

On the coat of arms of my father's family is the line from Horace's *Ars poetica*, "Nescit vox missa reverti." *The word, once sent forth can never come back.* As I sit down to write of Charlotte Bielawski, — for that was her name before her marriage, and when I worked with her, — I hear the words again, as they were drilled into me in childhood by my grandmother Jane Halsey, whose ancestor brought the Horatian precept into our family. Charlotte shared the sense of this with me, and it may have been a tacit, mutual recognition of this that united us in common effort in the first place and bound us together in so many undertakings. We both understood the power of the word, and we both knew, though nothing was ever said, that the only immortality that would ever give either of us satisfaction would be immortality achieved through the word.

At Columbia University in the City of New York, as the university in which Charlotte and I shared a common enthusiasm for books and the printed word liked to be known, we were in the process of building, from the autumn of 1931 on, a Polish department within the larger Department of Slavonic and East European Languages. The work had to be done from the bottom up, and in order to accomplish what we had in mind, we saw at once that it would be necessary for us to forge a series of bonds, all personal in the extreme, between ourselves and the various parts of the Polish world. Nothing, we sensed, could be accomplished unless

heart spoke to heart, and nothing unless all the necessary bonds were forged. One bond would have to be with the country of Poland itself, whose culture was our concern. Another between ourselves and the community of Americans of Polish extraction generally known as Polonia. Still a third bond would of necessity be one binding us to our students.

Charlotte understood all this, and fitted into our program with intelligence and zeal, when she came to us from Trenton where her family had settled in 1927 and were engaged in the printing and publishing business. She was fresh and eager, and we gathered her into the fold of our Klub Polski with enthusiasm. She probably did not know it, but her bright spirit gave us all a lift from the start, and her willingness to tackle any kind of job renewed our strength. Anxious always to be learning, she was never a follower only, but always at the head of the procession of our students, suggesting this or that project, and with a look of confidence, gazing straight in your eye, she would say, "Let's do it. We can do it."

The meetings of Klub Polski were always held on Thursday evenings, in tribute to an old tradition in Poland. During the Silver Age of Poland's literary history, the glow just before the darkness fell, Literary Thursdays were the order of the day in the Polish capital. They were held under the patronage of the King himself, Stanisław August Poniatowski, and were the focus of as brilliant a galaxy of minds as ever graced a board. Similar "Thursdays" were held in Free Poland (1918—1939), in Poznań, in the Działyński Palace on the town Rynek, and we copied them at Columbia, in the Thursday Evenings of our Klub Polski. Many people, young and old, participated in those gatherings, by their presence adding distinction and grace to the affairs, but of all none stands out more clearly than Charlotte, who was always there, and always, as we have said, with that bright spirit of hers which is so rare a thing to find in this world today.

In our Klub Polski work, we tried various projects, the most ambitious being the presentation of whole dramas in the Polish language. In 1938 we started with Słowacki's *Marja Stuart*. Under the direction of Caroline Rogozińska (then Ratajczak) this was

presented in a scintillating performance in Casa Italiana, as part of Columbia's tribute to the new British sovereigns. Next we gave Wyspiański's tragic drama of the November Uprising, *Warszawianka*, with Michalina Szymańska (now Wasung) in the leading role, and Caroline Ratajczak again bearing the directorial burden. For this we moved to the more ambitious stage of McMillin Academic Theatre, where in May, 1940, we presented another drama, this time Fredro's *Śluby panieńskie*, with Halina Chybowska (now Piotrowska) directing. In between (1939) we had given Fredro's short play *Świeczka zgasła* and portions of *Lato w Nohant*, a drama of Chopin and George Sand, in the Faculty Room of Philosophy Hall.

After the Fredro drama, plays were no longer possible, for there were no longer any men in New York, all having gone to war. Now we had to have a new idea, and it was here that Charlotte Bielawski entered the scene, with her radiant personality and her great knowledge, as her father's right-hand-man, of how to get the word into printed form and bound in a book. We decided books it would be, and at the thought Charlotte was behind the project, heart and soul. She would see that the books were published, if we would get the material together.

The book we planned first was to have for its purpose bridging the gap between Poland and ourselves. It was to be an anthology of prose and verse which would give the reader a feeling for the Polish land. It would help one unfamiliar with Poland to acclimate himself there readily, and enjoy himself at once. And thus *The Polish Land* was conceived. Charlotte and her brother-in-law Mr. Edward Krupa were the heroes of the project, along, I suppose, with myself, who gathered and assigned, polished and translated the material. With what difficulties we had to cope no one will ever know — no help, no materials — but somehow we managed to bring the book out.

For myself, the whole thing was a miracle, and although I set the date for launching long ahead, I never believed we would make it. Yet Charlotte's faith never flagged. December 14th is the day, December 14th the book will be ready, Charlotte said, — the year being, of course, 1943.



And sure enough, it was ready. Copies of *The Polish Land*, in its Polish-red binding and bright dust-jacket, were to be brought from Trenton the night of the 14th, and "unveiled," as it were, for the first time at a gala dinner in the Mens' Faculty Club at six. But in the middle of the night before, word was received from one of the Powers controlling our destiny that copies had to be in New York by nine in the morning at the latest, tha' the evening hour would be too late, and that if we did not meet the nine o'clock deadline the launching party would be cancelled by the university. There was no sense to this requirement and the university had nothing to do with it, but there it was. With what dauntlessness of spirit Charlotte received the word, when I called her on the phone at six in the morning of the 14th, I shall never forget. Copies will be there at nine, she assured me. And they were. It was again, as so often in those war days, a triumph of spirit over matter.

And so *The Polish Land* had a brilliant birthday party, fifteen years ago, and the credit was Charlotte's. As hers was the credit so often in so many projects of a cultural and artistic nature undertaken in her own home town of Trenton in those war years and after. No politics, no taking sides in controversial issues which never should have arisen to tear the Polish community apart, but always setting in motion projects for the toning up of men's minds and souls, through the medium of inspiration received out of her own Polish heritage: this was Charlotte's way of life. At Columbia, when we came to publish our second anthology, it was she again, along with her two sisters Loretta and Frances, who was the prime mover in the project, so that *The Wayside Willow* also owes much to her guiding hand. Whatever we did in our Klub Polski, you may be sure Charlotte had a part in it.

The word which Charlotte sent forth, and caused to be sent forth, can never come back. The word is her monument. A Horatian to the end, she did, in truth, "build a monument more enduring than bronze."

Marion Moore Coleman

## FOLK ELEMENTS IN SŁOWACKI'S *BALLADYNA* AND THEIR POLISHNESS

### **A Local Habitation?**

Every study, however brief, has to start somewhere, and if it is to have life must be born of some spark or challenge. The spark for us here was a comment in the *Literary Supplement* of *The Times* of London, by an anonymous reviewer, in an article dealing with a volume of Russian fairy tales. The tales, observed the reviewer,

... glitter with firebirds, golden cockerels, and phoenixes. Further, we have a flying ship, a sun-princess, the Queen-Witch (baba-yaga), and a crystal mountain where a twelve-headed dragon resides. Yet there is something disappointing in them.

The disappointment was in the non-Russianess of the tales: the total lack, as the reviewer saw it, of any "Slavonic background, either of landscape or character." Contrasting the case with what he found in a volume of Swiss tales also under review, the writer of the article noted that these do have what he missed in the Russian tales, namely,

... a local habitation in valley or canton. By a kind of irrational rationalism they explain some real phenomena, and they reflect the materialistic peasant, concerned with flocks and milk and farmwork.

Pondering the above, we asked ourselves, "What about Polish tales? What about Polish folklore generally? And about literary works employing themes from popular lore? Do we find in these that "local habitation?" Do these "explain some real phenomena" and shed light on the Polish peasant as he is?

The question poses a challenge. Gradually we shall answer it, but the realm of Polish legendry and lore is vast and to be covered



only by years of patient work, concentrating first on one aspect, then another. For the present, therefore, our field will be limited to the lore contained in a single work, of peculiar interest to us all in the year just ahead.

Small am I, and poor, but my heart  
Can embrace very millions of people.

Słowacki

Our reason for choosing a work by the poet Słowacki is, of course, the imminence of Słowacki Year. With the dawn of 1959 two Słowacki anniversaries will be at hand: first, April 3rd, which will be the one hundred and tenth anniversary of the poet's death; and later, September 4th, the sesquicentennial of his birth. In Poland and in all the world wherever poetry is cherished, the memory of Juliusz Słowacki will be invoked in the course of 1959, and for us to inquire into one of his works now, at the end of 1958, is simply to pre-empt for ourselves a place up ahead in what by mid-1959 will have become, we predict, a great memorial procession.

In selecting from Słowacki's large poetic output this drama *Balladyna* as the subject of our case-study in Polish folklore, we are but choosing the work which is the richest of all from his pen in elements from the folk. Słowacki was himself not "of the folk," but he yearned to hand down to his people a drama of Ariostian scope in which no element was neglected, the peasant to have his place along with the prince. Of this great project only two parts were completed, *Balladyna* and later *Lilla Weneda*. Both are close to the folk and both have as their setting the lake-and-forest region of Poland's northwest which was the scene of the earliest coming together of Slavic tribes hereabouts as a politic unit. At some future date we shall apply the same tests to the second drama as first we shall do here with *Balladyna*.

One of the great regrets of the Polish romantics was the lack of a mythology in their country's tradition, and the absence of a body of pre-historic legend of any scope and complexity. Słowacki felt the lack perhaps more than any other, and in *Balladyna* we see him trying to make up for it. In a country maid bending over

a strip of linen laid out to bleach on some streamlet's rim he sees a meadow-born Aphrodite. In a shepherd, wandering distraught in the forest, he finds a Filon. In the folk legend of an age when grain grew "forest high" and was headed out with bulging kernels, from base to tip of every stem, he discovers the Polish Age of Gold, which every nation must have to look back upon if it is to achieve greatness. In Lech, who organized the tribes around Lake Gopło, he discerns the lineaments of a Polish Saturn. And so, gradually, the dream is realized of giving Poland for every classical myth a native counterpart, and of providing the Polish tradition with an Olympus and a Troy, a Latium and an Avernus, together with all the heroes and gods properly belonging to them all.

My longings are like the desires  
of the klepht  
Who yearned to have in his coffin  
windows for the sun  
And the swallows . . .

*Słowacki*

*Balladyna* is the drama of a country girl who, driven by jealousy and unbridled ambition, murders one after another of those who stand in her way and in the end is accorded the fate which she has meted out to so many. She is the materialistic peasant the *Times* reviewer sought for in vain in the Russian folk tales, and the scene in which she operates is the very country from which such a girl would spring. It is Polish to the final degree, a region of woods and lakes, full of the peculiarly Polish melancholy that suggests the presence beneath the Lake of "cities, buried for eternities," the spires of which might be imagined rising from the mist-hung waters, and whose people, punished for their sins, might be heard in nightly lamentation.

At once the action is set in motion, and by one of the creatures most popular of all in Polish lore: a swallow, with wings so darkly blue as to seem black. A knight bearing the name Kirkor, a Galahad at heart, has come to seek advice from a Hermit living on the edge of Lake Gopło. What type of girl should he marry, and where is

he to find her? The Hermit is ready with wisdom born of long experience. "The great avoid. The royal and the rich are a viper race," he warns. "Seek your wife among the folk, and to find her, let a swallow be your guide."

"Let the first swallow that wings its way past show you the way," the Hermit goes on. "Follow the bird to where it has glued together its nest under thatch of straw. There you will find your wife if you but observe the swallows' sign."

The sign was, of course, the behavior of the birds at the approach of the maiden in question, for the swallow is in folk belief to be trusted as a judge of character. About Alina, the younger of two girls, who appear at the end of the swallow's flight, the birds twitter and chirp and behave in a friendly, adoring, fashion. Around Balladyna, they shudder and draw away. Kirkor sees this, but does not heed it, and so the drama is set in motion. Though he senses in Alina the "wife faithful as a turtle-dove" whom he seeks, he can not eliminate from the race the darkly seductive Balladyna, elder sister of Alina, and the swallows give their signal in vain.

Soon the swallows appear in another role, and again straight from popular lore. It is a lovely morning in early spring, and Słowacki has brought us to the edge of Lake Gopło. We stand there with our eyes glued to the lake as two creatures of fantasy, Skierka, an Ariel, and Chochlik, a gnome, watch impatiently for the return of their mistress Goplana, Spirit of the Lake. All winter Goplana has been asleep at the bottom of the lake, and now she is due to come forth out of the mist-wreath seen hovering on the water's surface. How, Skierka exclaims,

How can the fragrance of pine  
And the perfume of spring  
Not have roused her, our Queen?  
Fragrance so pleasant!  
Or the swish of the black-winged swallows  
Beating the lake till the glassy surface glints  
with a thousand orbs?

18

"Soon enough, never fear," Chochlik retorts, "the vixen will waken and harness her subjects to labor..." And then Skierka catches sight of Goplana herself. "See," he cries out,

There on a beam of light . . .  
Gushing forth from the water!  
Like a quivering blade of the sweet flag,  
Airily riding the breeze!

“But what is the garland she wears on her brow?” Chochlik asks, “Is it fashioned of blossoms? Or rushes?” “Of neither,” Skierka replies, “but of swallows that long have been biding their time in slumber.”

So have they been since the morning in autumn 20  
When they sank to the streamlet's depths.  
The stream wove them into a garland,  
A garland ebony-black,  
And cast them up in a wreath for Goplana's bright  
tresses.

Here we have a folk belief ancient as the swallow itself, perhaps, in the Polish realm, as throughout the length and breadth of the land, from Mazovia to Podolia, the notion prevails that swallows do not leave the Polish scene in autumn, but winter in lakes, where they lie beneath the ice in a circle, beak touching toe, sleeping away the cold winter months until spring's return. “When the swallows are all hidden beneath the surfaces of lakes,” Kasper Miaskowski exclaims in his *Slavonic Hercules*, composed in 1612. Miaskowski was a Mazovian, and in his part of the Polish realm as in Słowacki's, the strange belief is still as much alive today as in the most primitive pre-history of the region.

Still another popular belief as to the swallow plays its part in the drama, when in one of the later scenes the mother of Balladyna complains to the Hermit of the treatment she has received from her daughter. Balladyna has cast her widowed mother out of the castle where she herself is queening it as Kirkor's wife, turning the poor old woman loose to roam uncared for in the forest. “Today,” the widow laments, “I believe at last what I never would listen to before: that the swallows, before setting out on a flight overseas, take the old and decrepit, poor worn-out mother birds and strangle them.” This, we know, is a practice attributed by the folk to storks, but it is applied also to swallows, though less generally.



Before leaving the swallows, we may note that in *Balladyna* Słowacki turns often to birds when he wishes to make a brisk and pointed analogy. "Crime has a beat harsh as the woodpecker's tapping on the bark;" a country lad surrounded by a bevy of admiring girls is "like a kite (a bird of the hawk family) in the midst of a flock of sparrows;" and Chochlik goes to the stable "where there aren't any magpies nailed up over the entrance," recalling the old folk belief about magpies nailed above a gate being proof against evil spirits.

Silent in the birchwood tarries  
Long a maid, who pitcher carries,  
Pitcher filled with berries rosy,  
Ripe and red as any posy.

*Teofil Lenartowicz*

In Poland there is no scene more characteristic in summer than the market-stall in city or village square piled with heap upon heap of red raspberries, or the forest glade crimson with canes of the delectable fruit. Polish poetry has reflected this, and always been full of the perfume and flavor of the berry, which in the Polish tongue bears the lilting and seductive name *malina*. "Magical power above that of all other berries" does the raspberry possess, wrote Daniel Naborowski in the 17th century, adding that this is the very "berry of Venus, and the one from which the heart can derive its greatest sustenance."

*Balladyna* abounds with the raspberry's presence, and the berry appears always in a role having to do with the basic passion of life. We meet it first as a symbol of virginity. "For my lover I'll pluck wild strawberries, raspberries, even," murmurs Goplana in the ear of Grabiec, a country bumpkin for whom the Lake Spirit has conceived an insane passion. "But raspberries I have no use for," Grabiec retorts, "and sometimes when I see a girl carrying a jug of them on her head I go and break the jug, but of course not for the berries . . ."

Soon the berries are introduced to play the leading role of all in the drama, and with this we are in the realm of folklore at its



purest. Kirkor cannot decide between the two daughters, and has been persuaded by their mother, egged on by a whisper from Goplana's agent and emissary, Skierka, to submit the decision to the arbitration of the raspberries. Let the girls go to the forest, each with a jug, and the one who fills her jug first with the rich, ripe berries will be the knight's chosen bride.

The idea of "the raspberries' choice" was as ancient in the lore of the Eastern Borderland which was Słowacki's home country as the folk itself, and only a few years prior to the composition of *Balladyna*, which was written in 1834, had been enshrined in a ballad "Maliny" by Aleksander Chodźko, also a native of the Eastern Border and a student in Wilno University just one generation before the arrival there of Słowacki. Chodźko's poem appeared in 1829 and was at once popular. In *Balladyna* Słowacki makes its central idea the very axis of his drama.

It is evening when the knight Kirkor arrives at the hut of the two sisters and it is decided that the expedition to the forest will take place early the next morning. That night Alina has a wonderful dream, filled with the thought of the raspberries she is to pluck the next day. In her dream all the tender and radiant beauty of awakening love is symbolized by the berries, and when Alina finally goes to the forest, her eye quickly discerns them everywhere, in the most glorious profusion. "How many there are!" she exclaims enraptured, "and how rosy they are, like crimson flowers! How they sparkle, in their coating of dew!" With *Balladyna*, how different! After a night spent with her lover Grabiec, she sees but few berries in the glade, and they look bloody and sinister. The bloodiness proves to be a portent of what is to follow, as when *Balladyna* sees her sister's jug filled at once and running over, she takes out a knife and cuts her rival's throat.

Now the raspberries, robbed of their role as arbiter, become the symbol of conscience, God's instrument for forcing a confession. On *Balladyna*'s forehead, which the poor girl runs her hand over in distraction, a red stain appears. It is from the berries, the meager few that she has picked, and she tries to rub it off. The stain does not yield. Her mother tells her to get some water from the spring

at the base of yonder poplar tree, but in her despair Balladyna runs to the Hermit, hoping he will have some magic herb that will banish this Mark of Cain. The Hermit has nothing, and all the unhappy girl's conversation with him accomplishes is to reveal the truth of her crime.

Still the raspberries continue to play their part. At the banquet in Kirkor's castle Grabiec, dressed in fantastic garb, proposes that some welcoming dish be prepared for Kirkor on the knight's return from Gniezno, whither he has gone in an attempt to restore the crown of Lech to its rightful heir. "Let the dish be of raspberries," Grabiec proposes, "raspberries freshly gathered in the pinewood nearby. There the berries grow rosy and fat, and tasty and sweet. Let them be gathered and brought in."

At the word "raspberries" Balladyna shudders, but catches herself and cries, "Raspberries, yes, let raspberries be brought in!" The word is fatal. Hardly has it left Balladyna's lips than the figure of her dead sister rises in front of her eyes, clearly outlined as if the girl were alive. On her head Alina balances a gleaming black jug of raspberries. "Be off!" Balladyna exclaims, "and what you have in that jug, get rid of, the snaky thing that twists and turns as if it were from the grave!" Alina vanishes, but as she goes one of the guests, who is unaware of the dead girl's presence in the room, cries, "There's a fragrance in the air! A perfume, as of raspberries!" while another guest calls out, "Strange how the air seems filled with raspberry perfume!"

"Sound as a raspberry," "Wholesome as a raspberry," in these expressions we have folk aphorisms that sum up the whole symbolic role of the berry in the lore of the people and in Słowacki's use of that lore here. Gralon, the courier, uses the saying when Balladyna asks him as to her husband's health. "Did my husband tell you to use that sweet analogy?" Balladyna inquires, suspicious of the man and anxious to find out how much he knows. But Gralon evades the question and offers Balladyna the iron chest which Kirkor has sent as a test of her faithfulness. Now Balladyna is sure Gralon knows of her foul deed, and his head is doomed.

The willow saw it done,  
And from its bark will run  
The tale . . . it saw the crime,  
Its bark will give the sign . . .

Słowacki

As the raspberry, so the willow: characteristic of every portion of the Polish realm, whether drooping beside the country road or hanging listless above the meandering stream in some quiet meadow. In *Balladyna* we have the ancient and universal folk theme of "the pipe will tell," and since the play is Polish it is the willow rather than some other tree out of which the confessional pipe is fashioned.

We meet the willow first in the scene where Goplana, thwarted in her passion for Grabiec, turns the lad whole into a willow tree, so that he may, as she says, learn what it is to love unrequitedly, and to weep. The tree has hardly taken root, when the shepherd Filon comes along and in his grief for the dead Alina, whom he has discovered in the forest, breaks off a twig. "Jezus Marja!" Grabiec exclaims, feeling the hurt of the breaking branch, and the Hermit, wishing to calm Filon, who jumps at the sound, explains, "Don't worry. Devils are all about in the forest. I know them well. Sometimes they come and tap on the pane of my cell." Devils all about, especially in the willow tree, the Hermit might have added, as this tree, in folk belief, is the devil's own special abode.

It is the willow in the end that reveals *Balladyna's* crime, as Goplana, who witnesses it herself while hiding in a thicket near the scene, warns the girl it will do . . .

The willow saw the crime,  
Its bark will tell, in time . . .

18

the Lake Spirit cries, pursuing the murderess through the wood. And so it turns out. Kirkor and *Balladyna* are married, in a ceremony marked by the appearance of red spots on the petals of the white wedding flowers. Almost at once Kirkor leaves, to fight, as we have said, for the restoration of the rightful King, known to us in the guise of the Hermit. Left alone, *Balladyna* orders a gigantic feast to be served in the castle hall. At this, Grabiec, restored to human



form and dressed as the King of Diamonds, calls for a song. "Take this sceptre of mine and use it for a pipe," he commands. "Let it play a tune. It will do fine, for it is of willow, that was myself for a day. Just treat it as any pipe. Finger it as you would a pipe, and it will play."

Chochlik, who has been released temporarily from service to Goplana so that he may attend to the needs of Grabiec, takes the sceptre and begins to carry out his master's command. Precisely as Goplana has predicted, the willow "tells,"

Two maidens loved a lordling good, 18  
Two jugs they carried to the wood.  
Whichever plucked more swift that day  
The lord as bride would bear away . . .

Your Guardian Devil put a knife  
Into your hand, to take a life.  
Your sister berries plucked the more,  
But you the deadly knife-blade bore.

This soon with sister's blood was red,  
And fell upon your wicked brow  
A drop of blood with reddish glow.

Who knows if there the horrid stain  
From berries or viburnum came,  
Who knows if from some other cause . . .

"Go on, go on with your song," Balladyna cries, fascinated, and conscious of the stain that she has attempted to conceal with a black scarf. But before Chochlik can play another note, the murderess sinks in a faint. The bark has told its tale, and an ancient folk superstition has become a powerful element in a drama of elemental passion and jealousy.

Yet within these houses you will  
find the true poetry . . .

*Słowacki*

Folk ceremony abounds in *Balladyna*, as in the betrothal scene

and the country wedding. Folk sayings are also to be found in numbers: as when the mother assures Kirkor that her daughter is "genuine as gold," or one is said to "bow low as the cover of a chest." Then there is the saying, for our "bitter with the better" idea, "When rye is threshed, there is bound to be chaff rising from the flail." Or when the envoys, sent from Gniezno to greet Balladyna, are stunned by her iron verdicts and shake their heads in horror, as "rye is whipped in the wind." And when an old villager remarks that a woman of noble character, but ancient and toothless, would "have made a better wife for old Father Adam than Eve did: no apple trouble with her!" And of a mother's heart, "It is like a dragon's heart: cut it open and you will find it full of pieces of serpents, strung together like strips of linen." Or of girls with small and beautiful feet, that they are "good loving."

There are folk beliefs, too. For example, that the first dream you have in a new bed has some message of importance to you; that murder will always "out," if only through the babbling of some brook; that bridges are the abode of evil spirits.

Folk symbols also are present a-plenty: the pitcher, or jug, as the symbol of virginity, for example; the wreath of field flowers the same, and the garland of pea-vines as the sign of love unwanted, the "brush-off," in a word, as when Grabiec is crowned with such a vine by the maidens of the village. The marsh-fire is here as a symbol of infidelity; bread and salt of hospitality; the porch in front of the villager's hut of rural contentment and bliss. Here also the linden tree figures, as in a famous sonnet of Kochanowski, taking its place as the very signal and sign of family affection and peace. Looking forward to the day when his battles will be over and he can retire to some quiet country estate, Kirkor exclaims,

The King will envy me my life!  
A wife, a child, the cooling linden shade;  
My dreams beneath its shadow, golden mead  
To quaff. But one more mission must be made,  
And then the linden for the rest of time.

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On the whole, we find, Słowacki has given us the folk as they are, though at first, when we hear the Hermit's pronouncement to



the effect that goodness resides in this class alone and is to be found in no other, we are afraid he is not going to. His peasants are, in fact peasants, the good with the bad, Alina with her perfect uprightness and nobility, Balladyna with her jealousy and immorality. Grabiec, the country lout, with his drunken father and termagant mother and his own crude habits, nevertheless has a rough appeal, and is a good peasant type. The widow also, with, on the one hand, her pride, as seen when she flushes in resentment at the tactless and ill-bred remark of Kirkor about the dress she is wearing, and on the other her ambition and avarice as seen in her desire for a "golden knight" for each of her daughters. Whatever faults she may have are redeemed by her tenacity and endurance in the final scenes, and her loyalty to her daughter when she refuses to unseal her lips and reveal the murderess.

*Balladyna* ends with the two central figures of the tragedy removed from the earthly scene in a manner strictly in keeping with the folk mood of the drama. Goplana departs in the train of a flock of cranes, hurrying northward to regions past the beyond. Her tresses flying, herself enwrapped in gauzy mist, the Lake Spirit vanishes, clinging to the last of the great birds as the flock passes out of sight. Her work for the moment is accomplished and she goes into voluntary banishment. With Balladyna it is different. She is removed by the hand of God Himself, as Goplana, when she flies away, knows in advance will happen. Long before Goplana has set in motion the sequence of events which will prove Balladyna's doom, but the final event has to be in God's own hand, as he steers a bolt of His own lightning directly into the evil woman's heart.

Such an end for one of Balladyna's stripe was in the eyes of the folk the only possible end. She was too evil for man to deal with, her crime beyond man's punishing. Słowacki understood this only too well, from an experience of his own childhood, when, as the people saw it, God intervened Himself to slay with a bolt of sudden lightning the boy's own stepfather, in punishment, as those who heard of it said, for his treason against Poland. Even the gold standing near in a chest at the time of the father's slaying was reported to have run molten from the bolt: gold the man had

received, it was said, in payment for his services to the Russian Tsar. Such a killing was called by the people "divine," and for Slowacki to use it here, in order to strike the final blow against this incarnation of evil which his imagination had created in *Baladyna*, was to achieve in a way he could not otherwise have done, a smashing folk climax.

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## FIFTEEN YEARS OF POLISH FOLKLORE

At Alliance College, since March, 1956, we have been publishing a small quarterly devoted to the legendry and lore of Poland, and in particular to such traces of this as are found transplanted to our own American continent.

When we began publishing, we promised our subscribers an index every five years. Now, just a little over two years later, we are anticipating our promise and offering this Index. As will at once be seen, this covers a much larger field than just the ten issues of *Polish Folklore* that have appeared so far, and will serve, we trust, to make available much material now hidden away in anthologies and journals, and thus, to all intents and purposes, lost.

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- AJ ALLIANCE JOURNAL, Alliance College, 1951-58.
- MM MAZOVIAN MELODY, Columbia University Klub Polski, 1948.
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- PL THE POLISH LAND, Columbia University Klub Polski, 1943.
- Sar THE SARMATIAN, A Student Periodical published intermittently in the 1940's.
- WW THE WAYSIDE WILLOW, Columbia University Klub Polski, 1945.
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